

DOC Provides Alternatives for Indiana Youth

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Commissioner J. David Donahue

Pendleton, Indiana - (December 21, 2006) -The Pendleton Juvenile Correctional Facility announced its first graduation of participants in a specially-developed gang awareness program, Gang Realities in Our World.

The program designed for students at the maximum security facility is dubbed Gang Realities in Our World, (G.R.O.W). It is the first of its kind in Indiana that targets teenage offenders with violent ties to gangs in some of Indiana's largest cities and toughest neighborhoods. The program features 12 weeks of intensive group programming and 24-hour staff intervention.

"Governor Daniels has challenged correctional professionals to find innovative ways to provide long-term solutions within the treatment environment," said Donahue. "This program is proving helpful in providing alternatives for youth."

"What started as a challenge has turned into an opportunity for the youth of Indiana", said Sarah Hengstler, Program Treatment Supervisor. "Few states offer a similar program, so there weren't many models to follow in creating this one. Our program participants work and live together, regardless of gang affiliation. It's the 'follower' mentality we're combating, not any particular gang."

The students involved in this program are required to attend gang intervention group sessions twice a week. In this group, they learn about the realities of gangster activity and how it affects families, friends and communities.

"While it may seem unusual to house and treat rival gang members in the same area, the program had reduced conflict facility-wide," said Superintendent Michael Dempsey. "When predatory or gang-affiliated juveniles are removed from the general population, typical juvenile peer pressures are removed along with them. The remaining teens can access the treatment they need to succeed and gang members don't have the pressures to act out," added Dempsey.

"This program and others like it are key in accomplishing our goal of preserving the public trust and enhancing the lives of Indiana's citizens," added Donahue. I am very excited about this program's potential at all of our juvenile facilities."

About The Department of Correction

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department's home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department's Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.